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U.S. House of Representatives Committee on military affairs
Letter of Byron M. Cateheon relating to H.R. 8989...



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LETTER

OF

GEN. BYRON M. CUTCHEON

RELATING TO

H. R. 8989,

TO CREATE A SPECIAL ROLL, TO BE KNOWN AS THE
"VOLUNTEER RETIRED LIST."

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AFFAIRS,

U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

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611 PEARL STREET,
Ypsilanti, Mich., December 31, 1906.

Hon. H. OLIN YOUNG,
House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.

DEAR SIR: I have this morning received and read the statement of Gen. S. L. Glasgow before your committee in regard to the "Volunteer retired list" bill, now pending in committee, and I want to add a few words thereto.

First, in regard to pensions: General Glasgow's statement is not clear, and I must think, in speaking, his words were not fully taken down.

You are, of course, aware that in the pension laws no specific pensions are provided for officers above the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Above that general officers and general officers by brevet are ranked with lieutenant-colonels unless Congress sees fit to pass special bills for their benefit, as they have done in many cases. Under the present rule for age pensions they may get \$12 per month.

If the question is asked why a brigadier-general should get a larger pension than a captain or major, I return by asking why should a brigadier-general get more pay than a captain or major. Yet they always have in our army and in every army in the world. It is a universally recognized fact, and is based on greater age, greater knowledge, and ability, greater expense in maintaining the position, and the vastly greater responsibility and importance of the command.

At Cedar Creek 1 general turned the tide of the day from disaster to victory when 20,000 men were falling back in disorder; at Chickamauga 1 Thomas was worth 10,000 men.

At the "Bloody Angle," at Spottsylvania, General Lee saved the day to his army by his presence and personal exposure and daring.

Chairman Hull can doubtless recall instances in his own knowledge where a colonel saved his regiment from disaster, or a brigade commander was equal to a fresh regiment.

Next, in regard to age: I take my own regiment—the Twentieth Michigan—as a fair illustration. The average age of the enlisted men was under 22 years. The age of the captains and lieutenants was about the same as the men. In the company which I raised in this town for that regiment, the captain (Allen) was 21 and the two lieutenants (Van Cleve and Row) were each 22. Looking through the roster, I find they run about the same throughout the regiment, with two exceptions, and they were promptly mustered out when we got into the field.

But the field officers (from whom the higher ranks were mostly filled) were in my regiment aged as follows:

Colonel (Williams).....	35
Lieutenant-colonel (Smith).....	39
Major (Cutcheon).....	26

Average age, 33½. A difference in the average of more than ten years. The men and company officers were mostly boys from the farms and schools, many of them not more than 17 or 18 years old. One adjutant of the regiment (Berry) enlisted at 18 and was adjutant at 19. C. A. Lounsberry entered the regiment as sergeant at 19 and was captain at 20, and came home with the regiment in 1865 as lieutenant-colonel at 22.

I think General Glasgow understates rather than overstates the facts in regard to age. I believe the youngest officer that reached the grade of brigadier-general by brevet from Michigan was James H. Kidd, of Ionia. He entered the service as captain at 22, and by gallantry rose to be colonel and brevet brigadier-general; but he is the exception that proves the rule.

I wish that all who served in the civil war two and one-half years, at least one year at the front, and who have attained the age of 70, could be put on half pay. But I fear that to attempt it now would defeat the whole measure.

To recapitulate:

1. The class is a small one and a meritorious one.
2. This measure is a tentative one: the facts are fully investigated and known.
3. The cost is a mere nothing to the country.
4. By another Congress the facts in regard to the number and rank of survivors of lower grades can be fully investigated and known, and the scope of the act should be broadened to meet their cases.
5. This is not a baseless discrimination in favor of officers who attained the rank of general officers, but is simply applying principles already well established by precedent. The recognition is based upon greater age, greater and more important service, and the greater responsibility involved.
6. With most of the eligibles it is now or never; they are passing away rapidly.

Amend the bill if the committee thinks it must, but let us have a report. If it is to be killed let the House take the responsibility, and let it die in the open with a roll call of the House.

This may be the last chance you will ever have to render so great a service to these men who offered all to their country in their strong youth.

I will be glad if you will bring these considerations to the attention of other members of the committee.

I have the honor to be

Yours, most respectfully,

BYRON M. CUTCHEON,
*Once Colonel Twentieth and Twenty-seventh Michigan,
and Brevet Brigadier-General, U. S. Volunteers.*

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